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SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV PINR PHUM MNUC SOCI ECON KN KS  
SUBJECT: PDAS DONOVAN'S NORTH KOREA MEETINGS AT MOFAT

Classified By: EAP PDAS Joe Donovan. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Summary

¶1. (C) ROK Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Wi Sung-lac told EAP PDAS Joe Dononvan during a 12/2 meeting that Korea appreciated Ambassador Bosworth agreeing to stop in Seoul immediately before and after his upcoming trip to Pyongyang. Wi was concerned by the increasing number of senior PRC officials visiting Pyongyang; Wi related that Defense Minister Liang Guanglie had met Kim Jong-il but apparently did not raise denuclearization. In a separate 12/2 meeting, the Director General of MOFAT's Korean Peninsula Peace Regime Bureau, Huh Chul, told PDAS Donovan that the DPRK was refusing to discuss the resumption of Mount Kumgang tourism in the appropriate government-to-government channel. Huh related that the ROKG has pressed the North to make the Kaesong Industrial Complex a more business-friendly environment, free, for example, from arbitrary border closings. DG Huh called for consultations with the USG on the issue of humanitarian aid to the DPRK and on contingency planning. End summary.

Ambassador Wi on: Bosworth Trip...

¶2. (C) During a December 2 meeting with EAP PDAS Joe Dononvan, ROK Special Representative for Korean Peninsula Peace and Security Affairs Wi Sung-lac expressed appreciation for Ambassador Bosworth agreeing to stop in Seoul immediately before and after his upcoming trip to Pyongyang. The message would be clear: the trip was "anchored" in Seoul. Wi said he was doing his best to tamp down ROK media speculation about a possible breakthrough, emphasizing that the Bosworth trip would be a chance for North Korea to "do the right thing."

...and China

¶3. (C) Wi said he was concerned about recent senior-level visits by PRC officials to Pyongyang, including one by Defense Minister Liang Guanglie; the minister met Kim Jong-il but, according to Chinese media reports, did not raise the issue of denuclearization. The ROK needed U.S. help, Wi said, in encouraging "good behavior" by the PRC in its dealings with the DPRK. Help from Washington was also needed, he related, in getting the Chinese to treat North Korean refugees more humanely and to facilitate their timely transit to South Korea.

DG Huh Chul: Update on Kumgang Tourism...

¶4. (C) In a separate meeting, the Director General of MOFAT's

Korean Peninsula Peace Regime Bureau, Huh Chul, updated PDAS Donovan on current ROKG thinking about Mount Kumgang tourism.

Huh noted that Pyongyang has been pressing for a resumption of tours, which were suspended last year following the shooting death of a South Korean tourist. Huh complained that the North refuses to discuss the Kumgang issue in the appropriate government-to-government channel, opting instead to pass messages through Hyundai-Asan, the tour operator. Huh dismissed Kim Jong-il's reported pledge to Hyundai-Asan Chairwoman Hyun that ROK tourists will be safe if tours resume; it was the ROKG, not Chairwoman Hyun, that was responsible for the safety of ROK citizens, Huh stressed.

...and the Kaesong Industrial Complex

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¶15. (C) Turning to another Hyundai-Asan project, Huh said the North was pushing to expand the size of the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC). Huh related that the ROKG reaction has been to call for the North to truly make the KIC a business-friendly environment, free, for example, from arbitrary border closings.

Consultations on Humanitarian Aid...

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¶16. (C) DG Huh agreed there was a need for consultations on humanitarian aid. He said the ROKG had offered the North 10,000 metric tons of corn; instead of accepting it, DPRK media had blasted the gesture, deriding the amount as "small enough to fit on a seashell." Any ROK food aid provided to the North would have to be carefully monitored, Huh emphasized, to ensure that it reached people in need and not the military and/or elites. Huh added that the ROKG was negative about NGOs sending sophisticated medical equipment to the North, particularly to hospitals in the Pyongyang area. Such equipment, he argued, would only be used to care for regime loyalists. What the DPRK really needed was basic medical supplies, not state-of-the-art equipment, Huh asserted.

...and Contingency Planning

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¶17. (C) While Kim Jong-il's health crisis appeared to have passed and the North Korean leader was making an increasing number of public appearances, DG Huh said it was still important to have another round of ROK-U.S. consultations about contingency planning. (Note: Ambassador Wi and DG Huh suggested holding the discussions sometime in January and not in Seoul or Washington. End note.)

STEPHENS